

REGISTRATION FOR NURSES IN COLORADO: A HISTORY

BY LOUIE CRAFT BOYD

THE history of the world shows that people have massed themselves together to accomplish the ultimate good for all, and the profession of nursing is no exception to test the axiom that "in union is strength." If necessary in the beginning of things, and this one accepts as a fact, how much more so is it during the months and years when the perfection of the whole is in process of construction; when the progress, necessarily slow at times, seems no progress at all! This is the time during which each is put to the test and the result shows a fault-finder—a destroyer of every good thing—or one farsighted and noble enough to be loyal and true to the best interests of the work in hand.

About six years ago, the subject of legal registration for nurses was brought to the attention of the Trained Nurses' Association of Denver and two of the members compiled questions relative to the matter which were freely discussed in connection with the pros and cons of how to introduce and carry a bill through the legislature, but owing to intense opposition from many of the nurses the whole subject was dropped indefinitely. In the course of time, the necessity for registration became so strong that in May, 1904, the Colorado State Trained Nurses' Association was incorporated, primarily to have a bill prepared for the registration of nurses and to further its passage through the legislature. From the association's incorporation until November, 1904, all the work of organization was accomplished.

On November 10th, 1904, a special meeting of the association was called to decide the momentous question: "Shall a bill for the registration of nurses be placed before the coming session of the legislature?" When put in the form of a motion this was carried unanimously and the legislative committee vested with full power to select a lawyer to draft a registration bill and to incur any expense necessary to further the passage of the measure. On December 30th, 1904, the state association held a special meeting to hear and discuss the bill as drafted for presentation to the fifteenth general assembly. During the time preliminary to the convening of the legislature there was not only the drafting of the bill to be attended to, but writing to and personally visiting the different members of the legislature and their friends, as well as keeping the nurses informed concerning the progress of the work.

The bill introduced was similar to the Maryland law and, as its

numbers show, was presented early in the session; No. 9 in the Senate and No. 32 in the House. As the House took up the consideration of its bills first, a hearing on No. 32 was soon granted by the Committee on temperance and medical affairs. This committee made unsatisfactory amendments to the bill and, despite reasons to the contrary, retained them, reporting the measure out to Committee of the Whole. Some of the members of the legislature were not seen, owing to our ignorance concerning legislative methods, and their knowledge as to the best way to evade the ever-present lobbyist. Those who were seen, though, promised to give the bill every attention.

On February 1st, 1905, the bill came up for second reading in Committee of the Whole and before long it looked as if nothing would be left to show for the efforts of the state association, but in the midst of the proceedings, and before numerous proposed amendments could be acted upon, the committee arose. They objected to and cut up the application section to such an extent that, through the kindness of one of the members, we asked to have it stricken from the bill, though the major portion of it they allowed to pass in section 1 covering the members of the board. One member proposed striking out the provision for an examination, saying that nurses with diplomas should always be registered without examination, but gave in when convinced that training-school diplomas failed to show uniform methods of training for nurses. Had he persisted the value of the registration bill would have been vitally impaired. Much personal work was done before the next day and the result of this labor was shown the next morning when one of the principal opponents of the day before simply moved to take up and finish house bill No. 32. Owing to the kindness of two members of the House—one of whom, though a member of the committee which reported unfavorably on the bill, very kindly said he would offer any amendments we wished in Committee of the Whole and faithfully fulfilled this promise—some amendments were made and carried, and the bill passed its second reading in fairly good, recognizable shape. On its third reading there were only six against the bill and ten against the emergency clause. The senate committee, the chairman of which was a Christian Scientist, voted unanimously to report the amended house bill out to Committee of the Whole with recommendations that it pass. It was on the senate calendar from February 20th to March 31st, 1905, when the usual favorable motion prevailed and it was passed in Committee of the Whole. On April 1st it passed on third reading by a unanimous vote and Governor McDonald signed the bill on April 11th, 1905.

Considering the fact of a gubernatorial contest, which lasted from January 10th to March 22d, during which time the legislature held only a morning session for business, the afternoon being given over to the contest, and that seven hundred and eighty bills were presented, less than two hundred being passed, the nurses of Colorado have every reason for being thoroughly satisfied with that winter's work in the legislature.

It is too soon to state definitely what it has brought to us, but the remark of one of the senators after the passage of the bill conveys a hint of its value to nurses generally: "Now, you are a profession." A legal standard always tends toward the betterment of a profession and to prove the truth of this statement one only needs to note the upward growth of the professions of law and medicine since their legal enactments, hence the aim of registration for nurses is forward and its objects, the future nurse and her school.

Those states having legal standards should make every endeavor, by the affiliation of their schools, to fix a minimum uniform standard for the training of nurses, taking thought that this standard in no way exceeds the material which the state affords. This in turn will necessarily bring uniform laws governing the registration of nurses. Further, all those states, the provisions of whose laws are uniform, should endeavor to recognize this fact by reciprocity, issuing certificates to registered nurses without examination.

Adverse legislation is always a possibility at any and every session and as nurses can hope to counteract or defeat such efforts on the part of their opponents only by being "instant both in season and out of season," therefore, they should realize the importance of their law and accept it as their duty to maintain a constituent's acquaintance with those members of the legislative body who act as their representatives, thus stirring up and keeping alive their interest in nursing as a profession.

"IF the power to do hard work is not a talent, it is the best possible substitute for it. Things don't turn up in this world until somebody turns them up. A pound of pluck is worth a ton of luck. Luck is an *ignis fatuus*. You may follow it to ruin, but never to success."—Garfield.

THE term immunity signifies "that condition in which an individual or species of animals exhibits unusual or complete resistance to an infection for which other individuals or species show a greater or less degree of susceptibility."